



MOSS WOOD

Newsletter

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The 1995 Moss Wood Chardonnay

The only disappointment we've had with the 1995 Moss Wood Chardonnay is that it is in short supply. Unfortunately, in spite of the best efforts of enthusiastic viticulturists, the crop was reduced by half. After a warm winter, bud burst was early but cold weather in September stunted the growth of at least half, or perhaps as much as sixty or seventy per cent, of the shoots. The vines attempted to compensate for lost yield and bunch weight was up by about ten per cent. There is an old viticultural rule that you must always overestimate light crops by as much as fifty per cent. Even taking that into account, we underestimated the high yields and were pleasantly surprised with what we were able to harvest. The fruit was in excellent condition and ripened so quickly at the end that it got a little riper than we anticipated. While Moss Wood has never been shy of ripeness, the final result was not exactly what we wanted.

The wine was the first through our new Wilmes press and was produced in accord with current practice at the winery. It was pressed, drained, allowed to settle for forty eight hours, and fermented in stainless steel until the half way point. At this time, the wine was transferred to new French oak where it completed the fermentation process and remained on lees until November 1995. Then it was fined, filtered and bottled ready for release about four months later.



The 1995 Moss Wood Chardonnay shows classic varietal and regional characters, perfumed aromas of ripe melon and grapefruit with some toasty oak notes and lifted peach, melon and barrel ferment characters on the palate. It is quite an opulent wine with lively flavours, a potent fruit sweetness even though it is bone dry, and gentler tannins than usual (perhaps due to the influence of the new press) on a soft but crisp, lingering finish. This is a very impressive young chardonnay: intense, pristine and well-balanced. While it is delicious current drinking, we strongly encourage you to cellar some of the wine preferably for up to ten or fifteen years.

The 1996 Vintage at Moss Wood

The 1996 season gave every grower in the Margaret River region reason for quiet optimism with most expecting a slightly above average crop. A very good spring with excellent rainfall and no wind damage set the scene for a promising harvest. At Moss Wood, some areas of the vineyard experienced heavy rainfall during flowering but perfect conditions in other areas compensated for this. There was heavy rainfall (30mm) on Christmas Eve but Moss Wood was spared the hail which hit several other nearby properties. This rain topped off the season perfectly. As a result of a mild January, most vignerons expected a late vintage but two very warm weeks in early February (including a maximum of 39°C, the hottest day in eleven years) moved things along quickly. There was a big rush to pick the pinot noir and this took place at Moss Wood on the 15th and 19th of February. A moderation of the weather followed with average or slower than average ripening taking place. This meant an easing off of the pressure on picking after a brisk start, a bonus for the usually harassed vineyard team. At the time of writing, half the chardonnay had been picked and there was a hiatus while the rest ripened.

The crop is about five per cent above average. Keith is very pleased with the pinot noir, some of which has been pressed and some of which is still fermenting in the tanks. The juice appears to have a pleasing fruit fragrance, similar to the 1995, at the same stage, possible without the depth of colour of that wine. Without wanting to stick his neck out too far, Keith believes that it will be a good to very good year in terms of quality: probably one of the more delicate and fragrant of vintages, similar to the 1992 but with more intensity. 'As long as it remains fine and the warm weather continues' he adds as a necessary rider.

The New Warehouse

One of the most useful additions to the Moss Wood operation is the new warehouse (22.5 long x 12.5 wide x 6 metres high). Not made with mud bricks nor imposing architecture, it resembles the other Moss Wood buildings in that it is practical rather than glamorous. Actually it's an insulated shed which allows Moss Wood to have better and more practical work spaces including proper areas for bottling and labelling as well as a space for loading and unloading trucks. Just as importantly, it will enable barrels to be stacked more carefully. The increase in space will provide a separate cellar for barrel fermentation of the chardonnay. Previously, the red and the white wines had been stored in the same space. This extra floor area will enable Keith to transfer the new vintage cabernet into cask immediately the malolactic fermentation is finished. It will also enable Moss Wood to store two vintages of cabernet at the one time.

Moss Wood Chardonnay Vintage Chart

Vintage	Harvest Date	° Beaume (tonnes/ha)	pH	Yield	Vintage Rating (out of 10)
1983	18 February	12.6	3.28	8.7	7
1984	29 February	13.1	3.41	7.73	8
1985	22 February	12.5	3.24	8.44	7
1986	26 February	12.9	3.34	9.1	7
1987	24 February	12.9	3.29	10.13	8
1988	12 February	12.5	3.35	11.2	7
1989	20 February	12.9	3.41	7.82	7+
1990	6 March	12.9	3.24	6.85	10
1991	25 March	12.8	3.48	6.36	8
1992	27 February	13.5	3.35	7.3	8+
1993	4 March	13.6	3.35	10.29	10
1994	28 February	13.6	3.49	9.0	9
1995	17 Feb	13.7	3.30	7.0	10

The Willyabrup Descent

In his book, *A Taste of the Margaret River*, Peter Forrestal describes the Willyabrup Descent thus:

Held on the weekend following the Perth Wine Show (usually the second in September), this is a race in which teams representing the different wineries of the region attempt to steer their wine barrel down the Willyabrup Brook from Ribbon Vale to Pierro. Which is more preposterous, the fancy dress of the competitors or their antics in attempting to gain unfair advantage over their opponents, is often a mute point. Whatever the result, the day is dedicated to fun, cheating and camaraderie within the wine industry.

In an in-depth interview for this newsletter, popular Moss Wood vineyard manager, Ian Bell, spoke emotionally about last year's event. He pointed out that the uniform worn by the Moss Wood teams could in no way be described as preposterous. It was 'simply modern' was his comment. He explained that it has been inspired by the Robert Palmer song 'Simply Irresistable' and the group were made up to look like the Robert Palmer girls. It was scarcely surprising (to him) that Moss Wood won the best dressed prize and lunch at Flutes Cafe. (When asked to comment on this victory, the proprietors of Moss Wood said that they thought the vineyard manager looked 'simply gorgeous' on the day. They believed that his greater confidence and popularity with the opposite sex dated from this time.) Team captain, Ian Bell, confided that he found the result of the Descent itself rather a disappointment and asserted quietly but firmly that popular opinion was that the judges had been nobbled. 'We only managed to bribe one of the judges: that was our downfall' he muttered bitterly.



From left to right – Back row:
Marty Thomas, Anton Mann, Lionel Bass, Peter Adams, Peter Buckenara
Front row:
Ian Bell, Peter Murphy, Eloise Jarvis

Bill Pannell in Pemberton

Moss Wood founder, Bill Pannell, is living proof of the old adage 'You can't keep a good man down'. Bill has been developing his Pemberton vineyard, Picardy, and this year sees his first vintage with a small crop of pinot noir.

Keith recently visited Picardy and was stunned by the intensity that he saw in the grapes. While he claims that it pains him to say so, he doesn't believe that he's seen such intensity in a pinot noir in Western Australia before. Although the grapes have not yet been picked, the droopy clone looks brilliant, the new French clone 115 looks good and the upright clone has some distance to go before it ripens. Keith says Bill may possibly have the state's best 1996 pinot with his first crop.

The Moss Wood Wine Raffle

One of our valued, long-term mail order customers, Gavin Smyth is running a Connoisseur's Moss Wood Wine Raffle in conjunction with the Variety Club Bash. Gavin reassures us that one hundred per cent of the proceeds of the raffle (a maximum of 2,500 tickets at \$2 each) will go to the 'special children' at Princess Margaret Hospital via Car 101 of the Bash.

First prize is half a dozen bottles of the 1990 Moss Wood Special Reserve (which Keith rates at 10/10); second prize is one dozen of the 1986 Moss Wood Cabernet (rated 9/10 and beginning to drink beautifully); third prize is one dozen of the 1993 Moss Wood Semillon (rated 10/10).

We are delighted to give our support as we believe that this is a very worthy cause. As well as this, Keith has long nursed a burning desire to take part in the Variety Club Bash. Some are even uncharitable enough to suggest that he uses his too frequent trips to Perth as practice runs for the day on which he will have that opportunity.

For tickets, or details, of a very special wine auction to be held in Perth during May, contact Gavin or Imogen Smyth on:

phone: (09) 399 4222

fax: (09) 497 2869.

The raffle closes on Friday 6th June, 1996.

The New Garden

Although not yet established, the new native garden at Moss Wood is mostly planted out. Clare believes it will add an attractive dimension to the winery environs especially when the silver princess eucalypt, hakeas and grevillas are fully grown. The range of hardy shrubs will attract the little birds to the garden (rather than the vineyard), a feature which has great appeal for Keith. The native garden has some cottage garden definitions, the rosemary and lavender defines the path and some climbing roses will reach up to peppermint trees. With the blooming of the first rose, a Mr Lincoln, Clare sees great potential for these winemaker's friends and plans to use roses on the corners of the garden. At present, she is waiting on special roses, such as the climber, Chateau De La Clos Vougeot, to provide some finishing touches. As water is needed in the winery, the plan is for the garden to be self-reliant, except for the European species.

Freight

We have been having some problems with our wine being delivered to unattended addresses and thought we should bring the matter to the attention of our mail order customers. Most deliveries are between 9am and 1pm. If there is no one at the delivery address, a card is left and the wine not delivered until the customer has contacted the freight company and arranged for a delivery to an address at a time when it will be attended. At this point customers often change delivery to a business address.

The problem for Moss Wood is that we are charged for unsuccessful deliveries. What we are asking is that if your home address is likely to be unattended between 9am and 1pm, would you please use a business address on the order form.

Sybil

Keith is delighted to report that the latest addition to the Mugford family is a dog: Sybil, the Jack Russell. Only six weeks old when she arrived at Moss Wood, she has settled in with Bob, the kelpie. Naturally, Sybil has been named after Basil's partner and should always be called in the tone of voice we all picked up from *Fawlty Towers*.